

Japanese Religion

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Like many other ethnic groups throughout the world, the earliest inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago had from time immemorial their own unique way of viewing the world and the meaning of human existence and their own characteristic rituals for celebrating various events and phases of their individual and corporate life. To them the whole of life was permeated by religious symbols and authenticated by myths. From this tradition an indigenous religious form, which came to be designated as Shintō, or “the way of *kami*,” developed in the early historic period. Many aspects of the archaic tradition have also been preserved as basic features of an unorganized folk religion. Meanwhile, through contacts with Korea and China, Japan came under the impact of religious and cultural influences from the continent of Asia. Invariably, Japanese religion was greatly enriched as it appropriated the concepts, symbols, rituals, and art forms of Confucianism, Taoism, the Yin-yang school, and Buddhism. Although these religious and semireligious systems kept a measure of their own identity, they are by no means to be considered mutually exclusive; to all intents and purposes they became facets of the nebulous but enduring religious tradition that may be referred to as “Japanese religion.”

It is worth noting in this connection that the term *shūkyō* (“religion”) was not used until the nineteenth century. In Japanese traditions, religious schools are usually referred to as *dō*, *tō*, or *michi* (“way”), as in Butsudō (“the way of the Buddha”) or Shintō (“the way of *kami*”), implying that

these are complementary ways or paths within the overarching Japanese religion. Various branches of art were also called *dō* or *michi*, as in *chadō* (also *sadō*, “the way of tea”). This usage reflects the close affinity in Japan between religious and aesthetic traditions.

PREHISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Japanese archipelago lies off the Asian continent, stretching north and south in the western Pacific. In ancient times, however, there were land connections between the continent and the Japanese islands. Animal and human populations thus were able to reach present Japan from different parts of the continent. Although we cannot be certain when and how the first inhabitants migrated to the Japanese islands, general agreement traces Japan’s Paleolithic age back to between ten and thirty thousand years ago, when the inhabitants of the islands were primitive hunters and food gatherers who shared the same level and kinds of religious and cultural traits with their counterparts in other regions of the world.

Japan’s prehistoric period is divided into two phases, (1) the Jōmon period (*jōmon* literally means “cord pattern,” referring to pottery decoration) extending roughly from the fifth or fourth millennium to about 250 BCE, and (2) the Yayoi period (so named because pottery of this period was unearthed in the Yayoi district of present Tokyo) covering roughly the era from 250 BCE to 250 CE. Further subdivisions of both the Jōmon and Yayoi periods, as proposed by various archaeologists, are not relevant for our purpose. Archaeological evidence reveals a gradual development in people’s use of fishing and hunting tools, but in the artistic qualities of pottery making and designs and in the living patterns of the Jōmon people we still have few clues regarding their religious outlooks or practices. Thus, we can only infer that the practice of extracting certain teeth, for example, indicates a puberty rite and that female figurines must have been used for fertility cults.

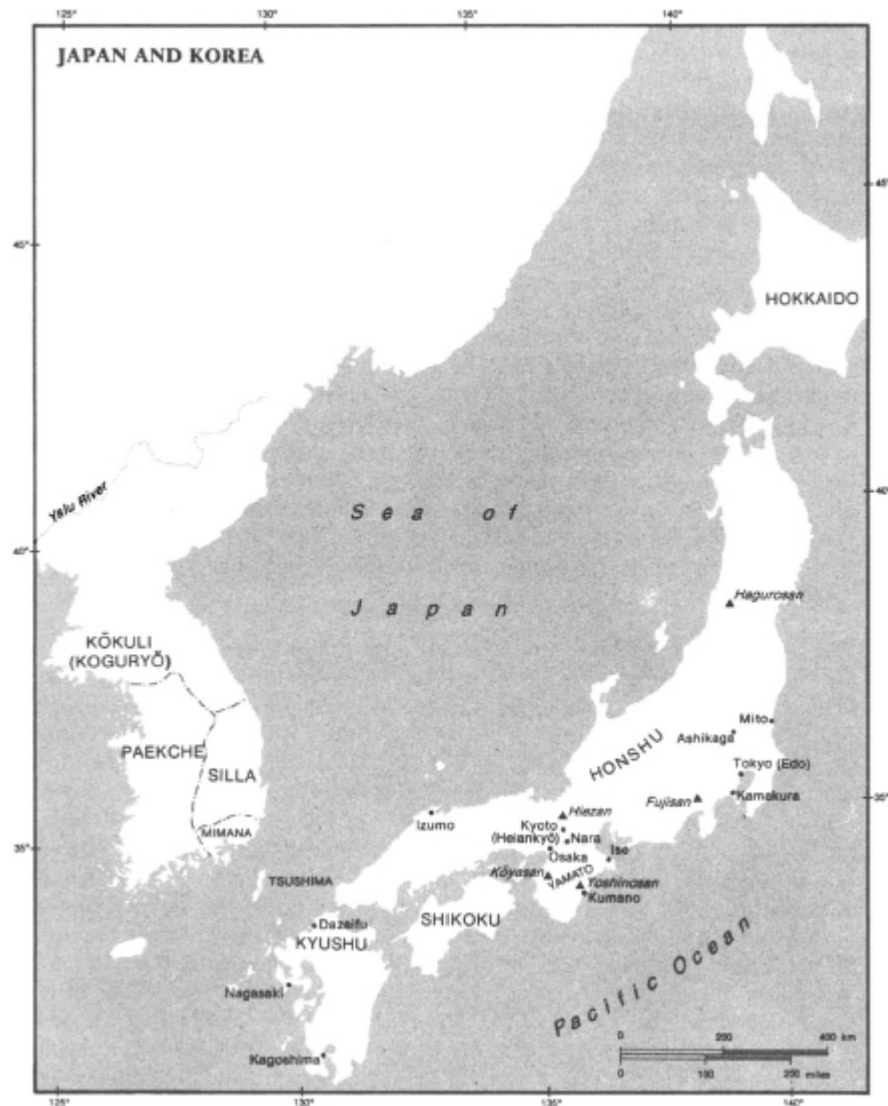
There is no clear-cut date for dividing the Jōmon and the Yayoi periods, because the Yayoi culture emerged in western parts of Japan while the Jōmon culture was still developing in the eastern parts. Nevertheless, the transition between these cultural forms was sufficiently marked so that some scholars even postulate the migration during the early third century BCE of a new ethnic group from outside. Yayoi pottery is more sophisticated

in design and manufacturing techniques and more utilitarian than Jōmon ware; Yayoi jugs, jars, and pots were used for cooking as much as for preserving food. Moreover, Yayoi culture was based on rice cultivation, employing a considerable number of hydraulic controls. Evidently, communities were established in places of low altitude, and many farmhouses had raised floors, the space beneath them serving as storehouses for grain. As the Yayoi period coincided with the Ch'in (221–206 BCE) and the Han (206 BCE–220 CE) dynasties in China, and as Chinese political and cultural influence was penetrating the Korean peninsula, some features of continental civilization must have infiltrated into western Japan. This infiltration may account for the development in the Yayoi period of spinning and weaving and the use of iron, bronze, and copper. We can only speculate, however, whether and to what extent new features of the Yayoi culture such as bronze mirrors, bronze bells, dolmens, and funeral urns had religious meaning.

The Ainu Controversy and a Culture-Complex Hypothesis. Although it is safe to assume that migrations of people to the Japanese islands were only insignificant parts of larger movements of archaic peoples from Eurasia to North America, it is extremely difficult to determine the ethnic identity of the first settlers in Japan. In this connection a heated controversy has been carried on in recent decades as to whether or not the Ainu—who have lived on the Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and Kurile islands but who throughout history have never been assimilated into the cultural life of the Japanese—were indeed the original inhabitants of the Japanese islands. Current scholarly opinion holds that the Ainu lived in northern Japan as early as the Jōmon period, but that there has never, at least until the last century, been any significant amount of intermarriage between them and other inhabitants of the Japanese islands. [See Ainu Religion.]

Although the exact identity of the Jōmon people still remains unsettled, it is widely assumed that a number of ethnic groups came to the Japanese islands from various parts of the Asian continent during the prehistoric period, bringing with them various religious and cultural elements. A comprehensive culture-complex hypothesis proposed by Oka Masao in 1933 suggests that there were five major typological components in late prehistoric and early historic Japanese culture, mythology, religion, and social structure. According to Oka, various ethnic groups from South China

and Southeast Asia with Melanesian, Austroasian, and Austronesian (Micronesian)cultural and religious traits—the “secret society” system; “horizontal cosmology”; female shamans; mythical motifs of brother-sister deities; initiation rites; cultivation of taro, yam, and rice; and so forth—provided the foundation for the agricultural society and culture of the Yayoi period. A Tunguz group originally from Siberia or Manchuria, on the other hand, contributed a “vertical cosmology,” exogamous patrilineal clan system, and the belief in deities (*kami*) who descend from heaven to mountaintops, trees, or pillars. Finally, an Altaic pastoral tribe that had subjugated other tribes in Manchuria and Korea migrated to Japan toward the end of the Yayoi period or the early part of the historic period, establishing itself as the ruling class over the earlier settlers. This group, which had an efficient military organization, shared with the Tunguz group similar religious and cultural traits such as a “vertical cosmology,” Siberian type shamanism, and a patriarchal clan (*uji*) system. Its most powerful family emerged as the imperial house in the historic period. Oka carefully avoids the question of the origin and development of the Japanese people and culture in a chronological sense. Although his hypothesis has been criticized by other scholars, his proposal still remains one of the most all-embracing efforts to explain the pluralistic nature of Japanese social structure, culture, and religion. Despite the lack of agreement concerning the details of the culture-complex thus developed, it is widely agreed that by the end of the Yayoi period those who inhabited the Japanese islands had attained a degree of self-consciousness as one people sharing a common culture.



The Yamatai Controversy. One of the age-old controversies regarding Japan in the Yayoi period centers around the geographical location of the state of Yamatai (Yamadai), an important state in the Japanese islands and one that is mentioned in such Chinese dynastic histories as the record of the Eastern (Latter) Han dynasty (25–220) and that of the kingdom of Wei (220–265). We learn from these documents that there were more than one hundred states in Japan and that they acknowledged a hereditary ruler who resided in the state of Yamatai. It is also recorded that the first Japanese emissary was dispatched to the Chinese court in 57 CE. A series of similar diplomatic missions followed in the second and third centuries. These same accounts reveal that during the second half of the second century political turmoil developed in Japan owing to the absence of a ruler. An unmarried

female shamanic diviner, Pimiko or Himiko, who “occupied herself with magic and sorcery, bewitching people,” then became the ruler, and order was restored. She was offered by the Chinese court the title “Queen of Wo (Wa) Friendly to Wei.” Evidently she lived in seclusion in a palace, protected by armed guards. She was attended by a thousand female servants, whereas only a single male, a “younger brother,” transmitted her instructions and pronouncements, presumably utterances she made in a state of trance. When she died, a great mound was raised, and a hundred attendants followed her to the grave. After her death a king was placed on the throne, but since the people did not obey him, a young girl of thirteen, Iyo, was made queen, and order was once again restored. From these Chinese records we learn, among other things, that political stability in prehistoric Japan depended heavily on magico-religious authority. The intriguing question still remains, however, whether or not the state of Yamatai was located in the western island of Kyushu, as many scholars now believe, or in the central part of the main island where the so-called Yamato kingdom was established in the early historical period.

EARLY HISTORICAL PERIOD

The early historical period of Japan corresponds to what archaeologists call the Kofun (“tumulus”) period (c. 250–600 CE), so named because of the gigantic mausoleums constructed during this period for the deceased of the ruling class in the present Nara and Osaka prefectures. These great tombs are the visible remains of the early Yamato kingdom. It is significant that Japan was not mentioned in Chinese records between the mid-third and the early fifth century. Many scholars conjecture that during this shadowy period, the Yamato kingdom was established in the present Nara Prefecture. Japan also gained a foothold on the southern tip of the Korean peninsula. During the fourth century, according to Korean sources, Japan became an ally of Paekche, one of the Korean states, and Korean artisans and scholars migrated to Japan, introducing new arts and techniques in weaving, ironwork, and irrigation, as well as the Chinese script and Confucian learning. In 391 Japanese expeditionary forces crossed the sea and fought against the north Korean state, Ko-guryo, but were badly defeated. Following the military defeat in Korea, Japan turned to the Chinese court to secure Chinese recognition and support for her claim of suzerainty over

Korea. In fact, the *Sung shu* (History of the Liu Sung Dynasty; 420-479) mentions the names of five Japanese rulers who sent emissaries to the Chinese court. During the sixth century Japan continued her effort to restore her influences on the Korean peninsula. In this connection Buddhism was introduced officially from Paekche to the Yamato court in 538 or 552.

Prior to the introduction of Sino-Korean civilization and Buddhism, Japanese religion was not a well-structured institutional system. The early Japanese took it for granted that the world was the Japanese islands where they lived. They also accepted the notion that the natural world was a “given.” Thus, they did not look for another order of meaning behind the natural world. Yet their religious outlook had a strong cosmological orientation, so that early Japanese religion might be characterized as a “cosmic” religion. Although the early Japanese did not speculate on the metaphysical meaning of the cosmos, they felt they were an integral part of the cosmos, which to them was a community of living beings, all sharing *kami* (sacred) nature. The term *kami*, a combination of the prefix *ka* and the root *mi*, signifies either a material thing or an embodied spirit possessing divine potency and magical power. The term *kami* thus refers to all beings that are worthy of reverence, including both good and evil beings. Early Japanese religion accepted the plurality of *kami* residing in different beings and objects, but their basic affirmation was the sacrality of the total cosmos. [See *Kami*.]

Equally central to the early Japanese outlook was the notion of *uji* (“lineage group, clan”), which provided the basic framework for social solidarity. Although the *uji* was not based on the strict principle of consanguinity, blood relationship, real or fictitious, was considered essential for communal cohesion. Each *uji* had clansmen (*ujibito*), groups of professional persons (*be*) who were not blood relations of the clansmen, and slaves (*nuhi*), all of whom were ruled by the *uji* chieftain (*uji no kami*). Each *uji* was not only a social, economic, and political unit but also a unit of religious solidarity centering around the *kami* of the *uji* (*ujigami*) who was attended by the *uji* chieftain. Indeed, sharing the same *kami* was considered more important to communal cohesion than blood relationship.

As far as we can ascertain, the early Japanese religion did not have fixed liturgies. Most religious functions took place either at home or around a sacred tree or sacred rock, in the paddy field, or on the seashore. Because the *uji* group tended to reside in the same locality, the *kami* of the *uji* often

incorporated the quality of regional *kami*. Also, there were numerous other spirits that controlled the health, fortune, and longevity of people. They were variously called *mono* (“spiritual entities”) or *tama* (“souls”) and were believed to be attached to human and other beings or natural things. Equally prevalent was the notion of “sacred visitors” (*marebito*) or ancestral spirits who came from distant places to visit human communities. Celestial bodies (the sun, moon, and stars), meteorological phenomena (wind and storms), and awe-inspiring natural objects (mountaintops, tall trees, forests, the ocean, and rivers) were also considered sacred and thus were venerated. Not surprisingly, then, a variety of persons—fortune-tellers, healers, magicians, sorcerers, and diviners—served as intermediaries to these divine forces.

Religion and Government. The early Yamato kingdom was a confederation of semiautonomous *uji*, each of which owned and ruled its respective members and territories. The Yamato rulers paid tribute to China and in return received a monarchical title from the Chinese imperial court. Within Japan, the Yamato rulers solidified their influence over other *uji* chieftains with their military power and with their claims to genealogical descent from the sun deity. They thus exercised the prerogatives of conferring such court titles as Ō-muraji (“great magnate,” conferred upon heads of the hereditary vassal families of the imperial *uji*) and Ō-omi (“chief of chieftains,” conferred upon heads of the imperial *uji*’s former rival *uji* that had acknowledged the imperial authority); granting sacred seed at spring festivals to all *uji* groups; and establishing sacred sites for heavenly and earthly *kami*, as well as regulating *matsuri* (rituals) for them. The term *matsuri* has the connotation “to be with,” “to attend to the need of,” “to entertain,” or “to serve” the *kami*, the soul of the deceased, or a person of high status. Prior to a *matsuri*, the participants were expected to purify themselves and to abstain from certain foods and from sexual intercourse. It was understood that the most important duty of the Yamato emperor (*tennō*) was to maintain close contact with the sun deity—who was at once the imperial family’s tutelary and ancestral *kami*—and other heavenly and earthly *kami* by attending to their needs and following their will, which was communicated through oracles, dreams, and divinations and which concerned government administration (*matsurigoto*). Thus, in principle, there was no line of demarcation between the sacred and the profane dimensions of life or between religious rituals (*matsuri*) and

government administration (*matsurigoto*). Both were the prerogatives of the sovereign, who was by virtue of his solar ancestry the chief priest as well as the supreme political head of the kingdom. The sovereign, in turn, was assisted by hereditary religious functionaries and hereditary ministers of the court. This principle of the unity of religion and government (*saisei-itchi*) remained the foundation of Japanese religion when it later became institutionalized and acquired the designation of Shintō in contradistinction to Butsudō (Buddhism).

Impact of Chinese Civilization and Buddhism on Japanese Religion.

With the gradual penetration of Chinese civilization—or, more strictly, Sino-Korean civilization—and Buddhism during the fifth and sixth centuries, Japanese religion was destined to feel the impact of alien ways of viewing the world and interpreting the meaning of human existence. Sensing the need to create a designation for their hitherto unsystematized religious, cultural, and political tradition, the Japanese borrowed two Chinese characters—*shen* (Jpn., *shin*) for *kami*, and *too* (Jpn., *tō* or *dō*) for “the way.” Inevitably, the effort to create almost artificially a religious system out of a nebulous, though all-embracing, way of life left many age-old beliefs and practices out of the new system. Those features that had been left out of Shintō have been preserved in the Japanese folk religious tradition. At any rate, the adoption of the name Shintō only magnified the profound tension between the indigenous Japanese understanding of the meaning of life and the world—authenticated solely by their particular historic experience on the Japanese islands—and the claims of Confucianism and Buddhism that their ways were grounded in universal laws and principles, the Confucian Tao (the Way) and Buddhist Dharma (the Law).

There is little doubt that the introduction of Chinese script and Buddhist images greatly aided the rapid penetration of Chinese civilization and Buddhism. As the Japanese had not developed their own script, the task of adopting the Chinese script, with its highly developed ideographs and phonetic compounds, to Japanese words was a complex one. There were many educated Korean and Chinese immigrants who served as instructors, interpreters, artists, technicians, and scribes for the imperial court and influential *uji* leaders of the growing nation. The Japanese intelligentsia over the course of time learned the use of literary Chinese and for many

centuries used it for writing historical and official records. Poets, too, learned to express themselves either in Chinese verse or by utilizing Chinese characters as a form of syllabary for Japanese sounds. The Japanese accepted Chinese as a written, but not a spoken, language. Even so, through this one-sided medium, the Japanese gained access to the rich civilization of China, and Chinese culture became the resource and model for Japan.

Through written media the Japanese came to know the mystical tradition of philosophical Taoism, which enriched the Japanese aesthetic tradition. The Japanese also learned of the Yin-yang school's concepts of the two principles (*yin* and *yang*), the five elements (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth), and the orderly rotation of these elements in the formation of nature, seasons, and the human being. The Yin-yang school thus provided cosmological theories to hitherto nonspeculative Japanese religion. It was also through written Chinese works that Japanese society, which had been based on archaic communal rules and the *uji* system, appropriated certain features of Confucian ethical principles, social and political theories, and legal and educational systems. [See Yin-yang Wu-hsing and Onmyōdō.]

The introduction of Buddhist art equally revolutionized Japanese religion, which despite its aesthetic sensitivities had never developed artistic images of *kami* in sculpture or painting. Understandably, when Buddhism was officially introduced to the Japanese court in the sixth century it was the Buddha image that became the central issue between the pro- and anti-Buddhist factions in the court. Anti-Buddhist leaders argued that veneration of a “foreign *kami*” would offend the “native *kami*.” After this initial controversy regarding statues of the Buddha, however, the chieftain of the powerful Soga *uji* secured imperial permission to build a temple in order to enshrine Buddha images. Soon, thanks to the energetic advocacy of the Soga, Buddhism was accepted by other aristocratic families, not because the profound meaning of Buddhist law (the Dharma) was appreciated but probably because Buddhist statues were believed to have magical potencies that would bring about mundane benefits. Thus the statues of Shaka (Śākyamuni), Miroku (Maitreya), Yakushi (Bhai sajayaguru), Kannon (Avalokiteśvara), and Amida (Amitābha) were venerated almost indiscriminately in the *uji*-based Buddhism of sixth- and early-seventh-century Japan.

Prince Shōtoku. The regency of Prince Shōtoku (573–621), who served under his aunt, Empress Suiko (r. 592–628), marks a new chapter in the history of Japanese religion. By that time the bankruptcy of Japan's Korean policy had resulted in the loss of its foothold on the southern tip of the Korean peninsula, while the powerful Sui dynasty had unified China after centuries of disunity. To protect Japan's survival in the precarious international scene, Shōtoku and his advisers attempted to strengthen the fabric of national community by working out a multireligious policy reconciling the particularistic Japanese religious tradition with the universal principles of Confucianism and Buddhism. Clearly, Shōtoku's mentor was Emperor Wen (r. 581–604) of the Sui dynasty, who unified the races, cultures, and diverse areas of vast China by utilizing Confucianism and Buddhism, and Taoism to a lesser degree, as the arms of the throne, and whose claim to semidivine prerogative was sanctioned and authenticated by various religious symbols.

Shōtoku himself was a pious Buddhist and is reputed to have delivered learned lectures on certain Buddhist scriptures. Yet his policies, as exemplified in the establishment of the Chinese-style "cap-ranks" of twelve grades for court ministers or in the promulgation of the "Seventeen-Article Constitution," represented an indigenous attempt to reconcile Buddhist and Confucian traditions with the native Japanese religious tradition. Shōtoku envisaged a centralized national community under the throne, and he advocated the veneration of Buddhism as the final refuge of all creatures. Moreover, he held the Confucian notion of *li* ("propriety") as the key to right relations among ruler, ministers, and people. [See Li.] Shōtoku was convinced that his policy was in keeping with the will of the *kami*. In his edict of 607 he states how his imperial ancestors had venerated the heavenly and earthly *kami* and thus "the winter [*yin*, negative cosmic force] and summer [*yang*, positive cosmic force] elements were kept in harmony, and their creative powers blended together," and he urged his ministers to do the same.

Prince Shōtoku took the initiative in reestablishing diplomatic contact with China by sending an envoy to the Sui court. He also sent a number of talented young scholars and monks to China to study. Although Shōtoku's reform measures remained unfulfilled at his untimely death, the talented youths he sent to China played important roles in the development of

Japanese religion and national affairs upon their return. [See the biography of *Shōtoku Taishi*.]

The Ritsuryō Synthesis. Prince Shōtoku's death was followed by a series of bloody power struggles, including the coup d'état of 645, which strengthened the position of the throne. The Taika reforms of 645 and 646 attempted to consolidate the power of the centralized government by such Chinese-style measures as land redistribution, collection of revenues, and a census. During the second half of the seventh century the government, utilizing the talents of those who had studied in China, sponsored the compilation of a written law. Significantly, those penal codes (*ritsu*; Chin., *lü*) and civil statutes (*ryō*, Chin., *ling*), which were modeled after Chinese legal systems, were issued in the name of the emperor as the will of the *kami*. The government structure thus developed during the late seventh century is referred to as the Ritsuryō ("imperial rescript") state. Although the basic principle of the Ritsuryō state was in a sense a logical implementation of Prince Shōtoku's vision, which itself was a synthesis of Buddhist, Confucian, and Japanese traditions, it turned out to be in effect a form of "immanent theocracy," in which the universal principles of Tao and Dharma were domesticated to serve the will of the sovereign, who now was elevated to the status of living or manifest *kami*. [See *Kingship*, article on *Kingship in East Asia*.]

It should be noted in this connection that the government's effort to consolidate the Ritsuryō structure was initially resisted by the former *uji* chieftains and provincial magnates who had residual power in the court. Ironically, after usurping the throne from his nephew, Emperor Temmu (r. 672–686) managed to bring new elements into the rank of court nobility and reorganize the government structure. Emperor Temmu ordered the compilation of two historical writings, the *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters) and the *Nihongi* (or *Nihonshoki*, the Chronicles of Japan), which were completed during the eighth century. Temmu is also credited with canonizing Amaterasu, the sun deity, as the ancestral *kami* and with making her Grand Shrine of Ise the tutelary shrine of the imperial house. [See *Amaterasu Ōmikami*.]

One characteristic policy of the Ritsuryō state was to support and control religions. Thus, the government enforced the *Sōniryō* (Law Governing Monks and Nuns), which was modeled after a Chinese code, the Law

Governing Taoist and Buddhist Priests, of the Yung-hui period (640–655). The government also elevated the Office of Kami Affairs (Kanzukasa) to a full-fledged Department of Kami Affairs (Jingikan), charged with supervising all officially sponsored Shintō shrines and overseeing the registers of the entire Shintō priesthood and other religious corporations. The Jingikan was given equal rank with the Great Council of State (Dajōkan).

NARA PERIOD

During the eighth century Japanese religion reached an important stage of maturity under Chinese and Buddhist inspirations. It was a golden age for the Ritsuryō state and the imperial court. Thanks to the newly acquired Chinese script, the two mythohistorical writings—the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki*—as well as the *Fudoki* (Records of Local Surveys), the *Man'yōshū* (Anthology of Myriad Leaves), and the *Kaifūsō* (Fond Recollection of Poetry) were compiled. Also in this century the Yōrō Ritsuryō (Yōrō Penal and Civil Codes), the legal foundation of the Ritsuryō state, were fixed in writing.

The immanent theocratic principle of the Ritsuryō state undoubtedly was based on the myth of the solar ancestry of the imperial house. Similarly, as mentioned earlier, the compilation of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki* was ordered by Emperor Temmu in 673 in order to justify his accession to the throne. Thus, although the format of these chronicles was modeled after Chinese dynastic histories, their task was to sort out myths, legends, and historical events in such a way as to establish direct genealogical connections between the contemporary imperial house and the sun deity. With this objective in mind, the chroniclers worked out a smooth transition from the domain of myths, which were classified as the “age of *kami*,” to the “historical” accounts of legendary emperors, who were presumed to be direct ancestors of the imperial house. Although the chronologies in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* were obviously fabricated, these mytho-historical writings provide a rich source of myths in which the ethos and meaning-structure of early Japanese religion unfold before us. Not surprisingly, these two chronicles came to be regarded as semicanonical scriptures of Shintō.

As important as the chronicles for our understanding of early Japanese religion is the *Man'yōshū*, which betrays amazingly little influence from the continent even though it was compiled two centuries after the introduction of Chinese civilization and Buddhism. In its literary form, the *Man'yōshū* utilized Chinese characters only for their sound value, disregarding their lexical meaning. Many of the poems in this anthology portray an interpenetration of what we now call religious and aesthetic values. The *Man'yōshū* also reveals an enduring feature of Japanese religion, namely, the poet as expert in sacred matters. The poet, as was also true in ancient Greece, was a maker and interpreter of sacral reality, and poems that addressed natural phenomena as *kami* were indeed sacred songs. [See Poetry, *article on Japanese Religious Poetry*.]

In contrast to earlier periods, when Korean forms of Buddhism influenced Japan, early eighth-century Japan felt the strong impact of Chinese Buddhism. In 710 the first capital, modeled after the Chinese capital of Ch'ang-an, was established in Nara, which was designed to serve as the religious as well as the political center of the nation. During the Nara period the imperial court was eager to promote Buddhism as the religion best suited for the protection of the state. Accordingly, the government established in every province state-sponsored temples (*kokubunji*) and nunneries (*kokubunniji*). In the capital city the national cathedral, Tōdaiji, was built as the home of the gigantic bronze statue of the Buddha Vairocana. The government sponsored and supported six schools of Chinese Buddhism. Of the six, the Ritsu (Vinaya) school was concerned primarily with monastic disciplines. The other five were more like monastic schools based on different philosophical traditions than sectarian groups. For example, the two Hinayanistic schools—the Kusha (deriving its name from the *Abhidharmakośa*) and the Jōjitsu (deriving its name from the *Satyasiddhi*)—were devoted to cosmological and psychological analysis of elements of the universe, whereas the Sanron (Mādhyamika) school specialized in dialectic analysis of concepts in order to suppress all duality for the sake of gaining perfect wisdom. The Kegon school (deriving its name from the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*) was a form of cosmotheism, and the Hossō (Yogācāra), probably the most influential system during the Nara period, stressed analysis of the nature of things and a theory of cause. Only those who had taken vows at one of the three official ordination platforms were qualified to be official monks. With government subsidy the monks

were able to devote their lives to the study of the doctrinal intricacies of their respective schools, subject, of course, to the Sōniryō. [See also Mādhyamika; Yogācāra; and Huayen.]

Despite such encouragement and support from the government, Buddhism did not have much impact on the populace. More important were three new religious forms that developed out of the fusion between the Japanese religious heritage and Buddhism.

The first new form was the Nature Wisdom school (Jinenchishū), which sought enlightenment by meditation or austere physical discipline in the mountains and forests. Those who followed the path, including some official monks, affirmed the superiority of enlightenment through nature to the traditional Buddhist disciplines and doctrines. The indigenous Japanese acceptance of the sacrality of nature was thus reaffirmed.

Second, a variety of folk religious leaders, variously called private monks (*shidosō*) and unordained monks (*ubasoku*; from Skt. *upāsaka*), emerged. Many of them were magicians, healers, and shamanic diviners of the mountain districts or the countryside who came under nominal Buddhist influence although they had no formal Buddhist training and had only tenuous connections to Buddhism. Their religious outlook was strongly influenced by the shamanistic folk piety of Japanese religious traditions and Taoism, but they also appropriated many features of Buddhism and taught simple and syncretistic “folk Buddhism” among the lower strata of society. [See Hijiri.]

A third new form grew out of the trend toward an interpenetration between, and amalgamation of, Shintō and Buddhism, whereby Shintō shrines found their way into the compound of Buddhist temples and Buddhist chapels were built within the precinct of Shintō shrines. The construction of Tōdaiji was enhanced by the alleged encouragement of the sun deity of the Grand Shrine of Ise and of the *kami* Hachiman of Usa Shrine, Kyushu. In fact, Hachiman was equated with a Buddhist *bodhisattva*. This Shintō-Buddhist amalgamation, which began in the eighth century and later came to be called Ryōbu (“two aspects”) Shintō, remained the institutional norm until the late nineteenth century.

Because of the excessive support of religion and culture by the court, which benefited only the aristocracy, the capital of Nara during the second half of the eighth century was doomed by political corruption, ecclesiastical

intrigue, and financial bankruptcy. Therefore the capital was moved in 794 from Nara to a remote place and then ten years later to the present Kyoto.

EROSION OF THE RITSURYŌ IDEAL

The new capital in Kyoto, Heiankyō (“capital of peace and tranquillity”), was also modeled after the Chinese capital. Although Kyoto remained the seat of the imperial court until the nineteenth century, the so-called Heian period covers only that time, in the ninth to the twelfth century, when political power was concentrated in the capital. Freed from ecclesiastical interference, the leaders of the Kyoto regime were eager to restore the integrity of the Ritsuryō system, and they forbade the Nara Buddhist schools to move into the new capital. Instead, the imperial court favored, side by side with Shintō, two new Buddhist schools, Tendai (Chin., T’ien-t’ai) and Shingon (Chin., Chen-yen), introduced by Saichō (767–822) and Kūkai (774–835), respectively. Both Saichō and Kūkai had been disillusioned in their youth by the formalism and moral decadence of the Buddhist schools in Nara, both had studied in China, and both were to exert great influence on the further development of Japanese religion.

Saichō, also known by his posthumous name, Dengyō Daishi, established the monastic center of the Tendai school at Mount Hiei, not far from Kyoto, and incorporated the doctrines of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (Lotus of the Good Law) *Sūtra*, Esoteric (i.e., Tantric) mysticism, Zen (Chin., Ch’an) meditation, and monastic discipline (Vinaya) into his teachings. He was conciliatory to Shintō, and his form of Shintō-Buddhist (Tendai) amalgam came to be known as Sannō Ichijitsu (“one reality”) Shintō. Shortly after Saichō’s death the Tendai school stressed its Esoteric elements to the extent that it came to be called Taimitsu (Tendai Esoterism). It should be noted that the Tendai monastery at Mount Hiei remained for centuries a most powerful institution and produced many prominent religious figures during the medieval period. [*See also Tendaishu and the biography of Saichō.*]

Kūkai, known posthumously as Kōbō Daishi, established the Shingon monastic center at Mount Kōya, not far from present-day Osaka, but also served as the head of the prestigious Tōji (Eastern Temple) in Kyoto. As a result, Kūkai’s teachings are often referred to as Tōmitsu (Eastern Esoterism). Kūkai was noted for his unusual erudition. His scheme of the ten stages of spiritual development included teachings from all the major

Buddhist schools and also from Hinduism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Moreover, he taught that the essential truth of Esoteric teaching could be revealed in art, thus affirming the mutual penetration of aesthetic and religious experiences. The Shingon school provided the theoretical basis for Ryōbu Shintō, as mentioned earlier. [See also *Shingonshū and the biography of Kūkai*] According to both the Tendai and Shingon traditions of the Shintō-Buddhist amalgam, Shintō *kami* were believed to be manifestations (*suijaku*) of the Buddhas who were the original realities (*honji*). [See *Honjisuijaku*.]

Meanwhile, in an important step toward restoring the Ritsuryō system, the government sponsored the *Shinsen shō jiroku* (New Compilation of the Register of Families), completed in 815. It divided the aristocracy into three arbitrary categories: (1) descendants of heavenly and earthly *kami* (*shinbetsu*), (2) descendants of imperial and other royal families (*kōbetsu*), and (3) descendants of naturalized Chinese and Koreans (*banbetsu*). The preface to this register acknowledged that provincial records had all been burned. Thus there were no reliable documents. Many commoners then pretended to be scions of noblemen, and children of naturalized Chinese and Koreans claimed to be the descendants of Japanese *kami*. Despite such a frank admission of the impossibility of the task involved, the *Register* presented the genealogies of 1,182 families as an “essential instrument in the hands of the nation.”

Nearly a century after the compilation of the *Shinsen shō jiroku* the government undertook the ambitious enterprise of collecting all supplementary rules to previously promulgated edicts and ceremonial rules known during the Engi era (901-922). Of the fifty books that comprise these documents, the *Engishiki*, the first ten are devoted to minute rules and procedures of dealing with various aspects of Shintō, such as festivals, the Grand Shrine of Ise, enthronement ceremonies, ritual prayers (*norito*), and a register of *kami*. Of special importance to the understanding of Japanese religion are the ritual prayers, some of which might be traced back to the mid-sixth century when ritualized recitation of prayers, inspired by the Buddhist example of reciting scriptures (*sūtras*), developed. [See *Norito*.] The remaining forty books of the *Engishiki* are detailed descriptions of rules and regulations of all the bureaus under the Grand Council of State (Dajōkan), including numerous references to affairs related to Shintō. It is interesting to note that the section on the Bureau of Yin-Yang (Onmyōryō),

book 16, mentions the duties of masters and doctors of divination and astrology in reciting the ritual prayers (*saimon*) addressed to heavenly and earthly *kami*. The underlying principle of the *Engishiki*, which epitomized the Ritsuryō ideal, was that the imperial court was the earthly counterpart of the heavenly court. Just as the court of the sun deity included various functionaries, the imperial court included religious and administrative functionaries, and the stylized daily rituals of the court, properly performed, had great bearing on the harmonious blending of the *yin* and *yang* elements in the cosmos as well as on the welfare of the people. The *Engishiki*, which was completed in 927, was not put into effect until 967. When it was finally implemented, the document was no longer taken seriously. This was true not only because the rules of procedures of the *Engishiki* were excessively cumbersome but also because the very ideal of the Ritsuryō system was eroding by that time.

The foundation of the Ritsuryō system was the sacred monarchy, authenticated by the mytho-historical claim that the sun deity had given the mandate to her grandson and his descendants to “reign” and “rule” the world, meaning Japan, in perpetuity. Ironically, during the Heian period the two institutions that were most closely related to the throne, namely, the Fujiwara regency and rule by retired monarchs (*inset*), undercut the structure of the Ritsuryō system.

The regency had been exercised before the ninth century only by members of the royal family and only in times when the reigning monarch needed such assistance. But from the late ninth century to the mideleventh century the nation was actually ruled by the regency of the powerful Fujiwara family. The institutionalization of the regency implied a significant redefinition of the Ritsuryō system by the aristocracy. The aristocratic families acknowledged the sacrality of the throne, but they expected the emperor to “reign” only as the manifest *kami* and not to interfere with the actual operation of the government. The latter was believed to be the prerogative of the aristocratic officials. Moreover, the Fujiwaras, who had managed to marry off their daughters to reigning monarchs, thus claimed added privileges as the titular sovereigns’ maternal in-laws.

The custom of rule by retired monarchs began in the eleventh century, when ambitious monarchs abdicated for the purpose of exercising power from behind the throne with the claim that they were still legitimate heads

of the patriarchal imperial family. This institution of *insei*, which also compromised the Ritsuryō principle, lost much of its influence by the end of the twelfth century owing to the growth of political power held by warrior families.

The Heian period witnessed the phenomenal growth of wealth and political influence of ecclesiastical institutions, both Shintō and Buddhist, equipped with lucrative manors and armed guards. However, among the lower strata of society, which were neglected by established religious groups, magico-religious beliefs and practices of both indigenous and Chinese origins prevailed. In addition to healers, diviners, sorcerers, and the practitioners of *onmyōdō* (Yin-yang and Taoist magic), mountain ascetics (*shugenja*)—heirs of the shamanistic folk religious leaders of the Nara period—attracted followers in places high and low. In the course of time, mountain ascetics allied themselves with the Tendai and Shingon schools and came to be known as the Tendai-Shugendō and the Shingon-Shugendō, respectively. [See Shu-gendō.] Such literary works as the *Genjimonogatari* (Tale of Genji) by Lady Murasaki and the *Makura no sōshi* (Pillow Book) by Lady Sei-shōnagon also reveal that during this period all calamities, from earthquake, fire, floods, and epidemics to civil wars, were widely believed to have been caused by the vengeance of angry spirits (*goryō*). Some of these spirits were venerated as *kami*, and Shintō shrines were built in their honor. Moreover, festivals for angry spirits (*goryō-e*), with music, dance, wrestling, archery, and horse racing, as well as Shintō, Buddhist, and Yin-yang liturgies, were held in order to pacify the anger of *goryō*.

Frequent occurrences of natural calamities during the Heian period also precipitated the widespread belief that the apocalyptic age of the Latter Days of the Law (*mappō*) predicted in Buddhist scripture was at hand. [See Mappō.] This may account for the growing popularity of the Buddha Amida (Skt., Amitābha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, or Amitāyus, the Buddha of Infinite Life), who had vowed to save all sentient beings and had promised rebirth in his Pure Land to the faithful. As we shall see presently, Amida pietism became a powerful spiritual movement in the subsequent period. [See Amitābha.]

The Heian period, and the elegant culture it produced, vanished in the late twelfth century in a series of bloody battles involving both courtiers and warriors. Then came a new age dominated by warrior rulers.

RELIGIOUS ETHOS DURING THE KAMAKURA PERIOD

That the nation was “ruled” by warrior-rulers from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century, even though the emperor continued to “reign” throughout these centuries, is a matter of considerable significance for the development of Japanese religion. There were three such feudal warrior regimes (*bakufu* or shogunates): (1) the Ka-makura regime (1192–1333), (2) the Ashikaga regime (1338–1573), and (3) the To-kugawa regime (1603–1867). Unlike the Ritsuryō state, with its elaborate penal and civil codes, the warrior rule—at least under the first two regimes—was based on a much simpler legal system. For example, the legislation of the Kamakura regime consisted of only fifty-one pragmatic principles. This allowed established Shintō and Buddhist institutions more freedom than they had under the cumbersome structure of the Ritsuryō state. It also set the stage for the development of new religious movements, many with roots in the folk tradition.

Of course the emergence of warrior rule signified the further weakening of the already battered Ritsuryō ideal. For example, unlike the Fujiwara noblemen and retired monarchs, who had wielded power from within the framework of the imperial court, the Kamakura regime established its own administrative structure consisting of three bureaus—military, administrative, and judiciary. The warriors for the most part were not sophisticated in cultural and religious matters. Many of them, however, combined simple Buddhist piety with devotion to the pre-Buddhist indigenous tutelary *kami* of warrior families rather than those of the imperial Shintō tradition. The cohesion of the warrior society, not unlike the early Yamato confederation of semiautonomous clans, was based on the *uji* and the larger unit of *uji* federation. Accordingly, the tutelary *kami* of warrior families (for example, Hachiman, the *kami* of war of the Minamoto *uji*, founder of the Kamakura regime) escalated in importance. At the same time, the peasantry, artisans, and small merchants, whose living standard improved a little under the Kamakura regime, were attracted to new religious movements that promised an easier path to salvation in the dreaded age of degeneration (*mappō*). On the other hand, the Zen traditions, which had been a part of older Buddhist schools, gained independence

under the influence of the Chinese Ch'an movement and quickly found patronage among the Kamakura rulers.

Significantly, all the leaders of new religious movements during this period had begun their careers at the Tendai headquarters at Mount Hiei but had become disillusioned by the empty ceremonialism, scholasticism, and moral corruption that characterized the monastic life of their time. Three of these leaders altered their religious resolutions when they found certitude of salvation in reliance on the compassionate Amida by *nembutsu* (recitation of the Buddha's name). They then became instrumental in the establishment of the three Pure Land (Amida's Western Paradise) traditions. They were Hōnen (Genkū, 1133–1212) of the Jōdo (Pure Land) sect, who is often compared with Martin Luther; Shinran (1173–1262) of the Jōdo Shin (True Pure Land) sect, a disciple of Hōnen, who among other things initiated the tradition of a married priesthood; and Ippen (Chishin, 1239–1289) of the Ji (Time) sect, so named because of its practice of reciting hymns to Amida six times a day. [See Jōdoshū; Jōdo Shinshū; and the biographies of Hōnen, Shinran, and Ippen.]

On the other hand, Nichiren (1222–1282), founder of the school bearing his name and a charismatic prophet, developed his own interpretation of the *Hokekyō* (Lotus Sutra), the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, as the only path toward salvation for the Japanese nation. [See Nichirenshū and the biography of Nichiren.]

In contrast to the paths of salvation advocated by the Pure Land and Nichiren schools, the experience of enlightenment (*satori*) was stressed by Eisai (Yōsai, 1141–1215), who introduced the Rinzai (Chin., Lin-chi) Zen tradition, and Dōgen (1200–1253), who established the Sōtō (Chin., Ts'ao-tung) Zen tradition. Zen was welcomed by Kamakura leaders partly because it could counterbalance the powerful and wealthy established Buddhist institutions and partly because it was accompanied by other features of Sung Chinese culture, including Neo-Confucian learning. The Zen movement was greatly aided by a number of émigré Ch'an monks who settled in Japan. [See *Zen and the biography of Dogen*.]

Despite the growth of new religious movements, old religious establishments, both Shintō and Buddhist, remained powerful during this period; for example, both gave military support to the royalist cause against the Kamakura regime during the abortive Jōkyū rebellion in 1221. On the other hand, confronted by a national crisis during the Mongol invasions of

1274 and 1281, both Shintō shrines and Buddhist monasteries solidly supported the Kamakura regime by offering prayers and incantations for the protection of Japan.

A short-lived “imperial rule,” 1333–1336, followed the decline of the Kamakura regime. This rule aided the Ise Shintō movement, which tried not very successfully to emancipate Shintō from Buddhist and Chinese influences. Ise Shintō influenced the royalist general Kitagatake Chikafusa (1293–1354), author of the *Jinnō shōtōki* (Records of the Legitimate Succession of the Divine Sovereigns). The imperial regime was also instrumental in shifting the centers of Zen and Sung learning, established by the Kamakura regime in the Chinese-style Gozan (“five mountains”) temples, to Kyoto. [See Gozan Zen.]

ZEN, NEO-CONFUCIANISM, AND KIRISHITAN DURING THE ASHIKAGA PERIOD

Unlike the first feudal regime at Kamakura, the Ashikaga regime established its *bakufu* in Kyoto, the seat of the imperial court. Accordingly, religious and cultural development during the Ashikaga period (1338–1573, also referred to as the Muromachi period) blended various features of warrior and courtier traditions, Zen, and Chinese cultural influences. This blending in turn fostered a closer interpenetration of religious and aesthetic values. All these religious and cultural developments took place at a time when social and political order was threatened not only by a series of bloody power struggles within the *bakufu* but also by famines and epidemics that led to peasant uprisings and, further, by the devastating Ōnin War (1467–1478) that accelerated the erosion of Ashikaga hegemony and the rise of competing daimyo, the so-called *sengoku daimyō* (“feudal lords of warring states”), in the provinces. In this situation, villages and towns developed something analogous to self-rule. Merchants and artisans formed guilds (*za*) that were usually affiliated with established Buddhist temples and Shintō shrines, whereas adherents of Pure Land and Nichiren sects were willing to defend themselves as armed religious societies. Into this complex religious, cultural, social, and political topography, European missionaries of Roman Catholicism, then known as Kirishitan, brought a new gospel of salvation.

Throughout the Ashikaga period established institutions of older Buddhist schools and Shintō (for example, the Tendai monastery at Mount Hiei, the Shingon monastery at Mount Kōya, and the Kasuga shrine at Nara) remained both politically and economically powerful. However, the new religious groups that had begun to attract the lower strata of society during the Kamakura period continued to expand their influence, often competing among themselves. Some of these new religious groups staged a series of armed rebellions—such as Hokke-ikki (uprisings of Nichiren followers) and Ikkō-ikki (uprisings of the True Pure Land followers)—to defend themselves against each other or against oppressive officialdoms. The Order of Mountain Ascetics (Shugendō) also became institutionalized as the eclectic Shugenshū (Shugen sea) and promoted devotional confraternities (*kōsha*) among villagers and townsmen, competing with new religious groups.

Zen and Neo-Confucianism. By far the most influential religious sect during the Ashikaga period was Zen, especially the Rinzai Zen tradition, which became *de facto* the official religion. The first Ashikaga shogun, following the advice of his confidant, Musō Soseki, established a “temple for the peace of the nation” (*ankokuji*) in each province. [See the biography of Musō Soseki.] As economic necessity compelled the regime to turn to foreign trade, Soseki’s temple, Tenryūji, sent ships to China for this purpose. Many Zen priests served as advisers to administrative offices of the regime. With the rise of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), which replaced Mongol rule, the third Ashikaga shogun resumed official diplomatic relations with China, again depending heavily on the assistance of Zen priests. After the third shogun regularized two Gozan (the five officially recognized Zen temples) systems, one in Kyoto and the second in Kamakura, Gozan temples served as important financial resources for the regime. Many Zen priests earned reputations as monk-poets or monk-painters, and Gozan temples became centers of cultural and artistic activities.

Zen priests, including émigré Chinese Ch’an monks, also made contributions as transmitters of Neo-Confucianism, a complex philosophical system incorporating not only classical Confucian thought but also features of Buddhist and Taoist traditions that had developed in China during the Sung (960–1127) and Southern Sung (1127–1279) periods. It

should be noted that Neo-Confucianism was initially conceived in Japan as a cultural appendage to Zen. Soon, however, many Zen monks upheld the unity of Zen and Neo-Confucian traditions to the extent that the entire teaching staff and students of the Ashikaga Academy, presumably a nonreligious institution devoted to Neo-Confucian learning, were Zen monks. [See Confucian Thought, *article on* Neo-Confucianism.]

The combined inspiration of Japanese and Sung Chinese aesthetics, Zen, and Pure Land traditions, coupled with the enthusiastic patronage of shoguns, made possible the growth of a variety of elegant and sophisticated art: painting, calligraphy, *renga* (dialogical poetry or linked verse), stylized *nō* drama, comical *kyōgen* plays, flower arrangement, and the cult of tea. [See also Drama, *article on* East Asian Dance and Theater.] Some of these art forms are considered as much the “way” (*dō* or *michi*) as the “ways” of *kami* or the Buddha, implying that they are nonreligious paths to sacral reality.

The Coming of Kirishitan. When the Ōnin War ended in 1478 the Ashikaga regime could no longer control the ambitious provincial daimyo who were consolidating their own territories. By the sixteenth century Portugal was expanding its overseas empire in Asia. The chance arrival of shipwrecked Portuguese merchants at Tanegashima Island, south of Kyushu, in 1543 was followed by the arrival in Kyushu in 1549 of the famous Jesuit Francis Xavier. Although Xavier stayed only two years in Japan, he initiated vigorous proselytizing activities during that time.

The cause of Kirishitan (as Roman Catholicism was then called in Japanese) was greatly aided by a strongman, Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), who succeeded in taking control of the capital in 1568. Angry that established Buddhist institutions were resisting his scheme of national unification, Nobunaga took harsh measures; he burned the Tendai monastery at Mount Hiei, killed thousands of Ikkō (True Pure Land) followers, and attacked rebellious priests at Mount Kōya in order to destroy their power. At the same time, ostensibly to counteract the residual influence of Buddhism, he encouraged Kirishitan activities. Ironically, this policy was reversed after his death. Nevertheless, by the time Nobunaga was assassinated, 150,000 Japanese Catholics, including several daimyo, were reported to be among the Japanese population.

The initial success of Catholicism in Japan was due to the Jesuits' policy of accommodation. Xavier himself adopted the name *Dainichi* (the Great Sun Buddha, the supreme deity of the Shingon school) as the designation of God; later, however, this was changed to *Deus*. Jesuits also used the Buddhist terms *jōdo* ("pure land") for heaven and *sō* ("monk") for the title *padre*. Moreover, Kirishitan groups followed the general pattern of tightly knit religious societies practiced by the Nichiren and Pure Land groups. Missionaries also followed the common Japanese approach in securing the favor of the ruling class to expedite their evangelistic and philanthropic activities. Conversely, trade-hungry daimyo eagerly befriended missionaries, knowing that the latter had influence over Portuguese traders. In fact, one Christian daimyo donated the port of Nagasaki to the Society of Jesus in 1580 hoping to attract Portuguese ships to the port, which would in turn benefit him. Inevitably, however, Jesuit-inspired missionary work aroused strong opposition not only from anti-Kirishitan daimyo and Buddhist clerics but from jealous Franciscans and other Catholic orders as well. Furthermore, the Portuguese traders who supported the Jesuits were now threatened by the arrival of the Spanish in 1592, via Mexico and the Philippines, and of the Dutch in 1600.

Meanwhile, following the death of Oda Nobunaga, one of his generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598), endeavored to complete the task of national unification. Determined to eliminate the power of Buddhist institutions, he not only attacked rebellious monastic communities, such as those in Negoro and Saiga, but also conducted a thorough sword hunt in various monastic communities. Hideyoshi was interested in foreign trade, but he took a dim view of Catholicism because of its potential danger to the cause of national unification. He was incensed by what he saw in Nagasaki, a port that was then ruled by the Jesuits and the Portuguese. In 1587 he issued an edict banishing missionaries, but he did not enforce it until 1596 when he heard a rumor that the Spanish monarch was plotting to subjugate Japan with the help of Japanese Christians. Thus in 1597 he had some twenty-six Franciscans and Japanese converts crucified. The following year Hideyoshi himself died in the midst of his abortive invasion of Korea. [*See also Christianity, article on Christianity in Asia.*]

THE TOKUGAWA SYNTHESIS

The power struggle that followed the death of Toyotomi Hideyoshi was settled in 1600 in favor of Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616), who established the *bakufu* in 1603 at Edo (present Tokyo). The Tokugawa regime, which was to hold political power until the Meiji restoration in 1867, was more than another feudal regime; it was a comprehensive sixfold order—political, social, legal, philosophical, religious, and moral—with the shogun in its pivotal position.

1. *Political order.* The Tokugawa form of government, usually known as the *bakuhau*, was a national administration (*bakufu*) under the shogun combined with local administration by daimyo in their fiefs (*han*).
2. *Social order.* Japan under the Tokugawas was rigidly divided into warrior, farmer, artisan, and merchant classes, plus special categories such as imperial and courtier families and ecclesiastics. Accordingly, one's birth dictated one's status as well as one's duties to nation and family and one's role in social relations.
3. *Legal order.* The Tokugawas formulated a series of administrative and legislative principles as well as rules and regulations (*hatto*) that dictated the boundaries and norms of behavior of various imperial, social, and religious groups.
4. *Philosophical order.* The Tokugawa synthesis was based on the Neo-Confucian principle that the order of Heaven is not transcendental but rather is inherent in the sacrality of nation, family, and social hierarchy.
5. *Religious order.* In sharp contrast to the Ritsuryō system, which was based on a principle of sacred kingship that authenticated the immanent theocratic state as the nation of the *kami*, the Tokugawas looked to the throne in order to add a magico-religious aura to their own version of immanent theocracy. They grounded this notion in what they felt were the natural laws and natural norms implicit in human, social, and political order. It is interesting to note in passing that the first shogun, Ieyasu, was deified as the “Sun God of the East” (Tōshō) and was enshrined as the guardian deity of the Tokugawas at Nikkō. According to the Tokugawas, all religions were to become integral and supportive elements of the Tokugawa synthesis.

However, the Tokugawas tolerated no prophetic judgment or critique of the whole system.

6. *Moral order*. Running through the Tokugawa synthesis was a sense of moral order that held the balance of the total system. Its basic formula was simple: the Way of Heaven was the natural norm, and the way of government, following the principle of benevolent rule (*jinsei*), was to actualize this moral order. This demanded something of each person in order to fulfill the true meaning of the relations (*taigi-meibun*) among different status groups. Warriors, for example, were expected to follow Bushidō (“the way of the warrior”). [See Bushidō.]

Kirishitan Under Tokugawa Rule. The religious policy of the Tokugawa regime was firmly established by the first shogun, who held that all religious, philosophical, and ethical systems were to uphold and cooperate with the government’s objective, namely, the establishment of a harmonious society. Following the eclectic tradition of Japanese religion, which had appropriated various religious symbols and concepts, the first shogun stated in an edict of 1614: “Japan is called the land of the Buddha and not without reason.... *kami* and the Buddha differ in name, but their meaning is one.” Accordingly, he surrounded himself with a variety of advisers, including Buddhist clerics and Confucian scholars, and shared their view that the Kirishitan religion could not be incorporated into the framework of Japanese religion and would be detrimental to the cause of social and political harmony. Nevertheless, the Tokugawa regime’s initial attitude toward Catholicism was restrained; perhaps this was because the regime did not wish to lose foreign trade by overt anti-Kirishitan measures. But in 1614 the edict banning Kirishitan was issued, followed two years later by a stricter edict. A series of persecutions of missionaries and Japanese converts then took place. Following the familiar pattern of religious uprising (such as Hokke- and Ikkō-ikki), armed farmers, fishermen, warriors, and their women and children, many of whom were Kirishitan followers, rose in revolt in 1637 in Shimabara, Kyushu. When the uprising was quelled, Kirishitan followers were ordered to renounce their faith. If they did not do so, they were tortured to death.

The regime also took the far more drastic measure of “national seclusion” (*sakoku*) when it cut off all trade and other relations with foreign powers

(with the exception of the Netherlands). Furthermore, in order to exterminate the forbidden religion of Kirishitan, every family was required to be registered in a Buddhist temple. However, “hidden Kirishitan” groups survived these severe persecutions and have preserved their form of Kirishitan tradition even into the present century.

Buddhism and the Tokugawa Regime. The Tokugawa regime’s anti-Kirishitan measures required every Japanese citizen to become, at least nominally, Buddhist. Accordingly, the number of Buddhist temples suddenly increased from 13,037 (the number of temples during the Kamakura period) to 469,934. Under Tokugawa rule a comprehensive parochial system was created, with Buddhist clerics serving as arms of the ruling regime in charge of thought control. In turn, Buddhist temples were tightly controlled by the regime, which tolerated internal doctrinal disputes but not deviation from official policy. Since Buddhist temples were in charge of cemeteries, Buddhism was highly visible to the general populace through burial and memorial services. Understandably, the combination of semiofficial prerogatives and financial security was not conducive to the clerics’ spiritual quest. The only new sect that emerged during the Tokugawa period was the Ōbaku sect of Zen, which was introduced from China in the mid-seventeenth century. [*See the biography of Ingen.*]

Confucianism and Shintō. Neo-Confucianism was promoted by Zen Buddhists prior to the Tokugawa period. Thus, that Neo-Confucian scholars were also Zen clerics was taken for granted. Fujiwara Seika (1561–1619) first advocated the independence of Neo-Confucianism from Zen. By his recommendation, Hayashi Razan (1583–1657), one of Seika’s disciples, became the Confucian adviser to the first shōgun, thus commencing the tradition that members of the Hayashi family served as heads of the official Confucian college, the Shōheikō, under the Tokugawa regime. Not surprisingly, Razan and many Neo-Confucians expressed outspoken anti-Buddhist sentiments, and some Confucian scholars became interested in Shintō. Razan, himself an ardent follower of the Shushi (Chu Hsi) tradition, tried to relate the *ri* (Chin., *li*, “reason, principle”) of Neo-Confucianism with Shintō. Another Shushi scholar, Yamazaki Ansai (1618–1682), went so far as to develop a form of Confucian Shintō called Suika Shintō. The Shushi school was acknowledged as the official guiding ideology of the

regime and was promoted by powerful members of the Tokugawa family, including the fifth shogun. Especially noteworthy was Tokugawa Mitsukuni (1628–1701), grandson of the first shogun and the daimyo of Mito, who gathered together able scholars, including Chu Shun-shui (1600–1682), an exiled Ming royalist. He thereby initiated the Mito tradition of Confucianism. The *Dainihonshi* (History of Great Japan), produced by Mito scholars, subsequently provided the theoretical basis for the royalist movement.

The second tradition of Neo-Confucianism, Ōyōmeigaku or Yōmeigaku (the school of Wang Yang-ming), held that the individual mind was the manifestation of the universal Mind. This school also attracted such able men as Nakae Tōju (1608–1648) and Kumazawa Banzan (1619–1691). Ōyōmeigaku provided ethical incentives for social reform and became a pseudo-religious system. Quite different from the traditions of Shushi and Ōyōmei was the Kogaku (“ancient learning”) tradition, which aspired to return to the classical sources of Confucianism. One of its early advocates, Yamaga Sokō (1622–1685), left a lasting mark on Bushidō, while another scholar of this school, Itō Jinsai (1627–1705), probed the truth of classical Confucianism, rejecting the metaphysical dualism of Chu Hsi.

Throughout the Tokugawa period, Confucian scholars, particularly those of the Shushigaku, Ōyōmeigaku, and Kogaku schools, exerted lasting influence on the warriors-turned-administrators, who took up Confucian ideas on the art of governing and on the modes of conduct that were appropriate for warriors, farmers, and townspeople, respectively. Certainly, such semireligious movements as Shingaku (“mind learning”), initiated by Ishida Baigan (1685–1744), and Hōtoku (“repaying indebtedness”), championed by Ninomiya Sontoku (1787–1856), were greatly indebted to Confucian ethical insights. [*See the biographies of the principal Neo-Confucian thinkers discussed above.*]

Shintō Revival and the Decline of the Tokugawa Regime. With the encouragement of anti-Buddhist Confucianists, especially those of Suika Shintō, Shintō leaders who were overshadowed by their Buddhist counterparts during the early Tokugawa period began to assert themselves. Shintō soon found a new ally in the scholars of Kokugaku (“national learning”), notably Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), whose monumental study of the *Kojiki* provided a theoretical basis for the Fukko (“return to

ancient”) Shintō movement. Motoori’s junior contemporary, Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843), pushed the cause of Fukko Shintō even further. [*See Kokugaku and the biographies of Motoori and Hirata.*] The nationalistic sentiment generated by the leaders of the Shintō revival, National Learning, and pro-Shintō Confucians began to turn against the already weakening Tokugawa regime in favor of the emerging royalist cause. The authority of the regime was threatened further by the demands of Western powers to reopen Japan for trade. Inevitably, the loosening of the shogunate’s control resulted in political and social disintegration, which in turn precipitated the emergence of messianic cults from the soil of folk religious traditions. Three important messianic cults developed: Kurozumikyō, founded by Kurozumi Munetada (1780–1850); Konkōkyō, founded by Kawate Bunjirō (1814–1883); and Tenrikyō, founded by Nakayama Miki (1798–1887). [*See Kurozumikyō; Konkōkyō; and Tenrikyō.*]

MODERN PERIOD

The checkered development of Japanese religion in the modern period reflects a series of political, social, and cultural changes that have taken place within the Japanese nation. These changes include the toppling of the Tokugawa regime (1867), followed by the restoration of imperial rule under the Meiji emperor (r. 1867–1912); the rising influence of Western thought and civilization as well as Christianity; the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895); the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905); the annexation of Korea (1910); World War I, followed by a short-lived “Taishō Democracy”; an economic crisis followed by the rise of militarism in the 1930s; the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and China followed by World War II; Japan’s surrender to the Allied forces (1945); the Allied occupation of Japan; and postwar adjustment. The particular path of development of Japanese religion was, of course, most directly affected by the government’s religious policies.

Meiji Era. Although the architects of modern Japan welcomed many features of Western civilization, the Meiji regime was determined to restore the ancient principle of the “unity of religion and government” and the immanentist theocratic state. The model was the Ritsuryō system of the seventh and eighth centuries. Accordingly, sacred kingship served as the

pivot of national policy (*kokutai*). Thus, while the constitution nominally guaranteed religious freedom and the historic ban against Christianity was lifted, the government created an overarching new religious form called State Shintō, which was designed to supersede all other religious groups. In order to create such a new official religion out of the ancient Japanese religious heritage an edict separating Shintō and Buddhism (*Shin-Butsu hanzen rei*) was issued. The government's feeling was that the Shintō-Buddhist amalgam of the preceding ten centuries was contrary to indigenous religious tradition. After the abortive Taikyō Sempū ("dissemination of the great doctrine") movement and the compulsory registration of Shintō parishioners, the government decided to utilize various other means, especially military training and public education, to promote the sacred "legacy of the *kami* way" (*kannagara*): hence the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors (1882) and the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890). Significantly, from 1882 until the end of World War II Shintō priests were prohibited by law from preaching during Shintō ceremonies, although they were responsible—as arms of the government bureaucracy—for the preservation of State Shintō.

Furthermore, in order to keep State Shintō from becoming involved in overtly sectarian activities, the government created between 1882 and 1908 a new category of Kyōha ("sea") Shintō and recognized thirteen such groups, including Kurozumikyō, Konkōkyō, and Tenrikyō, which had emerged in the late Tokugawa period. Like Buddhist sects and Christian denominations, these groups depended on nongovernmental, private initiative for their propagation, organization, and financial support. Actually, Kyōha Shintō groups have very little in common. Some of them consider themselves genuinely Shintō in beliefs and practices, whereas some of them are marked by strong Confucian features. Still others betray characteristic features of folk religious tradition such as the veneration of sacred mountains, cults of mental and physical purification, Utopian beliefs, and faith healing.

Buddhism. Understandably Buddhism was destined to undergo many traumatic experiences in the modern period. The Meiji regime's edict separating Shintō and Buddhism precipitated a popular anti-Buddhist movement that reached its climax around 1871. In various districts temples were destroyed, monks and nuns were laicized, and the parochial system,

the legacy of the Tokugawa period, eroded. Moreover, the short-lived Taikyō Sempū movement mobilized Buddhist monks to propagate Taikyō, or government-concocted “Shintō” doctrines. Naturally, faithful Buddhists resented the Shintō-dominated Taikyō movement, and they advocated the principle of religious freedom. Thus, four branches of the True Pure Land sect managed to secure permission to leave the Taikyō movement, and shortly afterward the ill-fated movement itself was abolished. In the meantime, enlightened Buddhist leaders, determined to meet the challenge of Western thought and scholarship, sent able young monks to Western universities. Exposure to European Buddhological scholarship and contacts with other Buddhist traditions in Asia greatly broadened the vista of previously insulated Japanese Buddhists.

The government’s grudging decision to succumb to the pressure of Western powers and lift the ban against Christianity was an emotional blow to Buddhism, which had been charged with the task of carrying out the anti-Kirishitan policy of the Tokugawa regime. Thus, many Buddhists, including those who had advocated religious freedom, allied themselves with Shintō, Confucian, and nationalist leaders in an emotional anti-Christian campaign called *haja kensei* (“refutation of evil religion and the exaltation of righteous religion”). After the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890, many Buddhists equated patriotism with nationalism, thus becoming willing defenders and spokesmen of the emperor cult that symbolized the unique national polity (*kokutai*). Although many Buddhists had no intention of restoring the historic form of the Shintō-Buddhist amalgam, until the end of World War II they accepted completely Buddhism’s subordinate role in the nebulous but overarching super-religion of State Shintō.

Confucianism. Confucians, too, were disappointed by the turn of events during the early days of the Meiji era. It is well to recall that Confucians were the influential guardians of the Tokugawa regime’s official ideology but that in latter Tokugawa days many of them cooperated with Shintō and nationalist leaders and prepared the ground for the new Japan. Indeed, Confucianism was an intellectual bridge between the premodern and modern periods. And although the new regime depended heavily on Confucian ethical principles in its formulation of imperial ideology and the principles of sacred national polity, sensitive Confucians felt that those

Confucian features had been dissolved into a new overarching framework with heavy imprints of Shintō and National Learning (Kokugaku). Confucians also resented the new regime's policy of organizing the educational system on Western models and welcoming Western learning (*yōgaku*) at the expense of, so they felt, traditionally important Confucian learning (*Jugaku*). After a decade of infatuation with things Western, however, a conservative mood returned, much to the comfort of Confucians. With the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education and the adoption of compulsory "moral teaching" (*shūshin*) in school systems, Confucian values were domesticated and presented as indigenous moral values. The historic Chinese Confucian notion of *wang-tao* ("the way of true kingship") was recast into the framework of *kōdō* ("the imperial way"), and its ethical universalism was transformed into *nihon-shugi* ("Japanese-ism"). As such, "nonreligious" Confucian ethics supported "super-religious" State Shintō until the end of World War II.

Christianity. The appearance—or reappearance, as far as Roman Catholicism was concerned—of Christianity in Japan was due to the convergence of several factors. These included pressures both external and internal, both from Western powers and from enlightened Buddhist leaders who demanded religious freedom. Initially, the Meiji regime, in its eagerness to restore the ancient indigenous polity, arrested over three thousand "hidden Kirishitan" in Kyushu and sent them into exile in various parts of the country. However, foreign ministers strongly advised the Meiji regime, which was then eager to improve its treaties with Western nations, to change its anti-Christian policy. Feeling these pressures, the government lifted its ban against the "forbidden religion." This opened the door to missionary activity by Protestant as well as Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox churches. From that time until 1945, Christian movements in Japan walked a tightrope between their own religious affirmation and the demands of the nation's inherent immanentist theocratic principle.

The meaning of "religious freedom" was stated by Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909), the chief architect of the Meiji Constitution, as follows:

No believer in this or that religion has the right to place himself outside the pale of the law of the Empire, on the ground that he is serving his god.... Thus, although freedom of religious belief is

complete and exempt from all restrictions, so long as manifestations of it are confined to the mind; yet with regard to external matters such as forms of worship and the mode of propagandism, certain necessary restrictions of law or regulations must be provided for, and besides, the general duties of subjects must be observed.

This understanding of religious freedom was interpreted even more narrowly after the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education; spokesmen of anti-Christian groups stressed that the Christian doctrine of universal love was incompatible with the national virtues of loyalty and filial piety taught explicitly in the Rescript. Some Christian leaders responded by stressing the compatibility of their faith and patriotism. Although a small group of Christian socialists and pacifists protested during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, most Christians passively supported the war effort.

Another burden that the Christian movement has carried from the Meiji era to the present is its “foreignness.” The anti-Kirishitan policy and all-embracing, unified meaning-structure of the Tokugawa synthesis that had lasted over two and a half centuries resulted in an exclusivistic mental attitude among the Japanese populace. A new religion thus found it difficult to penetrate from the outside. However, during the time of infatuation with things Western, curious or iconoclastic youths in urban areas were attracted by Christianity because of its foreignness. As a result, westernized intellectuals, lesser bureaucrats, and technicians became the core of the Christian community. Through them, and through church-related schools and philanthropic activities, the Christian influence made a far greater impact on Japan than many people realize.

Christianity in Japan, however, has also paid a high price for its foreignness. As might be expected, Christian churches in Japan, many of which had close relationships with their respective counterparts in the West, experienced difficult times in the 1930s. Under combined heavy pressure from militarists and Shintō leaders, both the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide in Rome and the National Christian Council of the Protestant Churches in Japan accepted the government’s interpretation of State Shintō as “nonreligious.” According to their view, obeisance at the State Shintō shrines as a nonreligious, patriotic act could be performed by all Japanese subjects. In 1939 all aspects of religion were placed under strict government

control. In 1940 thirty-four Protestant churches were compelled to unite as the “Church of Christ in Japan.” This church and the Roman Catholic church remained the only recognized Christian groups during World War II. During the war all religious groups were exploited by the government as ideological weapons. Individual religious leaders who did not cooperate with the government were jailed, intimidated, or tortured. Christians learned the bitter lesson that under the immanentist theocratic system created in modern Japan the only religious freedom was, as stated by Itō Hirobumi, “confined to the mind.”

Japanese Religion Today. In the modern world the destiny of any nation is as greatly influenced by external events as by domestic events. As far as modern Japan was concerned, such external events as the Chinese Revolution in 1912, World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the worldwide depression intermingled with events at home and propelled Japan to the world stage. Ironically, although World War I benefited the wealthy elite, the economic imbalance it produced drove desperate masses to rice riots and workers to labor strikes. Marxist student organizations were formed, and some serious college students joined the Communist party. Many people in lower social strata, benefiting little from modern civilization or industrial economy and neglected by institutionalized religions, turned to messianic and healing cults of the folk religious tradition. Thus, in spite of the government’s determined effort to control religious groups and to prevent the emergence of new religions, it was reported that the number of quasi religions (*ruiji shūkyō*) increased from 98 in 1924 to 414 in 1930 and then to over one thousand in 1935. Many of them experienced harassment, intervention, and persecution by the government, and some of them chose for the sake of survival to affiliate with Buddhist or Kyōha Shintō sects. Important among the quasi-religious groups were Ōmotokyō, founded by Deguchi Nao (1836–1918); Hito no Michi, founded by Miki Tokuharu (1871–1938); and Reiyūkai, founded jointly by Kubo Kakutarō (1890–1944) and Kotani Kimi (1901–1971). After the end of World War II these quasi-religious groups and their spiritual cousins became the so-called new religions (*shinkō shūkyō*). [See New Religions, *article on* New Religions in Japan; Ōmotokyō; and Reiyūkai Kyōdan.]

The end of World War II and the Allied occupation of Japan brought full-scale religious freedom, with far-reaching consequences, to Japanese religion. In December 1945 the Occupation force issued the Shintō Directive dismantling the official structure of State Shintō; on New Year's Day 1946 the emperor publicly denied his divinity. Understandably, the loss of the sacral kingship and State Shintō undercut the mytho-historical foundation of Japanese religion that had endured from time immemorial. The new civil code of 1947 effectively abolished the traditional system of interlocking households (*ie seido*) as a legal institution, so that individuals were no longer bound by the religious affiliation of their households. The erosion of family cohesion greatly weakened the Buddhist parish system (*danka*) as well as the Shintō parish systems (*ujiko*).

The abrogation of the ill-famed Religious Organizations Law (enacted in 1939 and enforced in 1940) also radically altered the religious scene. Assured of religious freedom and separation of religion and state by the Religious Corporations Ordinance, all religious groups (Buddhist, Christian, Shintō—now called Shrine Shintō—and others) began energetic activities. This turn of events made it possible for quasi religions and Buddhist or Sea Shintō splinter groups to become independent. Sea Shintō, which comprised 13 groups before the war, developed into 75 groups by 1949. With the emergence of other new religions the total number of religious groups reached 742 by 1950. However, with the enactment of the Religious Juridical Persons Law (*Shūkyō hōjin hō*) in 1951, the number was reduced to 379—142 in the Shintō tradition, 169 Buddhist groups, 38 Christian denominations, and 30 miscellaneous groups.

In the immediate postwar period, when many people suffered from uncertainty, poverty, and loss of confidence, many men and women were attracted by what the new religions claimed to offer: mundane happiness, tightly knit religious organizations, healing, and readily accessible earthly deities or divine agents. It is worth noting in this connection that the real prosperity of the new religions in Japan came after the Korean War, with the heavy trend toward urbanization. Not only did the urban population increase significantly, but the entire nation assumed the character of an industrialized society. In this situation some of the new religions, especially two Buddhist groups, namely, Sōka Gakkai and Risshō Kōseikai, gained a large number of followers among the new middle class. Some of these new religions took an active part in political affairs. For example, as early as

1962, Sōka Gakkai scored an impressive success in the elections of the House of Councillors, and its own political wing, Kōmeitō, now enjoys a bargaining power that no other religiously based group has achieved in modern Japanese politics. Other groups have also attempted to gain political influence by campaigning for their favorite candidates for political offices. [See Sōka Gakkai *and* Risshō Kōseikai.]

It has not been easy for older Buddhist groups to adjust to the changing social situation, especially since many of them lost their traditional financial support in the immediate postwar period. Also, religious freedom unwittingly fostered schisms among some of them. Nevertheless, the strength of the older Buddhist groups lies in their following among the intelligentsia and the rural population. Japanese Buddhist scholarship deservedly enjoys an international reputation. Japanese Buddhist leaders are taking increasingly active roles in pan-Asian and global Buddhist affairs while at the same time attending to such issues as peace and disarmament at home.

Christian churches, which had experienced hardship and mental anguish before and during World War II, rejoiced over their religious freedom after the war. They showed determination as they confronted many neglected problems, repairing church buildings damaged during the war, regrouping their scattered adherents, and training young leaders for the ministry. However, the popular interest in Christianity that developed in the immediate postwar years waned quickly. Furthermore, the massive support Christian churches expected from abroad never materialized, largely owing to the erosion of missionary incentive among Western churches except in Roman Catholic and fundamentalist groups. Christianity in Japan still suffers from its foreignness, its theological conservatism, and the lack of grass-roots participation in rural areas. On the other hand, church-related educational institutions are growing, and younger Christians are cooperating with other religionists in dealing with social and political issues.

It is difficult to feel the pulse of Japanese religion in the late twentieth century because the external signs are too contradictory. In the midst of their highly technological industrial society, the Japanese people still feel close to nature, still love poetry and the arts, and still observe numerous traditional rituals. A significant part of Japanese religious life continues to focus on family values and on observances performed in the home. [See

Domestic Observances, *article on Japanese Practices*.] In addition, in spite of high literacy and scientific education, many men and women of high and low social status still subscribe to fortune telling, geomancy, and healing cults. The Japanese are avid global travelers, and yet their world of meaning is still strongly tied to their land, language, custom, and tradition. Furthermore, one is amazed by the quick recovery of Shintō, which smoothly transformed itself from State Shintō to Shrine Shintō almost overnight during the Allied occupation. Millions of pilgrims and worshipers continue to visit large and small Shintō shrines. Understandably, all these contradictory features are difficult for the Japanese to resolve. It may well be that with the redefinition of the once-divine monarchy and the loss of an overarching religious form, the character of the nebulous but deeprooted Japanese religion has been transformed into a new framework that accommodates a genuine coexistence of different religious forms in the name of religious freedom.

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